

17. The Faith and Order Committee: Section A

New Ways of Working

The connexional year 2008-9 saw a major change in the Faith and Order work of the Connexion. After a number of years in preparation, the new Faith and Order Network was launched at our inaugural Faith and Order Network Conference held at St John's College, Durham on 2-4 September 2008, entitled 'Doing Theology in the Public Arena: Recreating Faith and Order for the 21st Century'. The conference drew together about 100 members of the new network who are organised into twelve resource groups. Both the President and Vice-President were able to attend the event, as well as the new General Secretary of the Methodist Church/Secretary of the Conference. Keynote speakers included Bev Thomas (Amani Consultancy), The Revd Professor Frances Young (Birmingham University), Dr Esther Reed (Exeter University), Professor Sebastian Kim (York St John University), The Rt Revd Dr N T Wright (Bishop of Durham), The Revd Dr David Wilkinson (Principal of St John's College). The conference included opportunity for the resource groups to meet together and begin planning for the work of the network in the coming connexional year. A number of Connexional Team members also attended the conference, which was a huge success. The network will usually conduct its business electronically with provision for a Network Conference every other year. The next Network Conference will be held on 20-22 September 2010, also at St John's College, Durham.

The twelve resource groups (RGs) resource a smaller main committee appointed by

the Conference which has enabled us to dispense with the additional executive committee. Whilst the Conference continues to appoint the main committee, membership of the resource groups is managed internally within the network. As we gather more information on how different RGs work, we will need to put in place an appropriate replacement/succession strategy for bringing new people into the network and supplementing where more attention is needed. As such, the Secretary is maintaining a list of names to consider for inclusion in the network. The network is currently aware that through this succession process a number of key equality and diversity areas need addressing, specifically increasing the participation of: BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) Methodists; those with disability and/or impairment; lay people; deacons; young people. Within this overall equality and diversity policy, members of the RGs will have particular skills or expertise related to the remit of each RG and the overall working ethos of the Faith and Order Committee, and these factors will guide any process for selection for a specific RG.

The twelve RGs cover the following areas of work: Bible, Ecumenism, Methodist Doctrine and Theology; Worship and Liturgy; Inter Faith Relations; Methodism: Ethos, History and Theology; Ministry Issues; Missiology and Evangelism; Pastoral Issues; Social and Political Issues; Theological Education and Communication; Interface (Apologetics).

In addition to the Network Conference, the committee has met three times since the Scarborough Conference of 2008:

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once immediately after the Conference, once in January and again in March. Throughout the year, the committee has been continuing to develop consultative processes for its work – seeking to be involved in major pieces of work within the Connexional Team from the outset rather than coming in at the last minute with questions or suggestions which radically alter work which has already been developed. The Committee is keen to continue to stress this emphasis and to work at new opportunities to share the contents of previous papers produced by the Committee about its ways of working: *What does Faith and Order do?* and *What is a Methodist Perspective?*

In pursuance of the Standing Orders related to its work (SO 330), the Committee continues to be interested particularly in the outworking of the ecumenical vision of the Connexion. The Committee has been glad to work alongside the ecumenical resources and personnel within the new Connexional Team, to continue to welcome ecumenical representatives to its meetings, and to continue to offer theological consultancy

to the Joint Implementation Commission through the Secretary to the Faith and Order Committee. In the new arrangements for the review of LEP constitutions and in the establishment of the new MAPUM (Methodist Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission) which supersedes CLED (Committee for Local Ecumenical Development), the Committee has been glad to ensure a continuing role for its work. It is hoped that the Committee will continue to have a full role in the ongoing discussions with our Covenant Partner, the Church of England, and in conversations with other bodies such as the United Reformed Church.

The Committee has maintained its active links with many other bodies internal and external to the Methodist Church (Church of England Liturgical Commission, Methodist Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission, Churches Together in England - Theology and Unity Group, European Methodist Theological Commission, Faith and Order Advisory Group [of the Church of England], Four Nations Ecumenical Reference Group, Joint Liturgical Group, Methodist Publishing House).

***RESOLUTION

17/1. The Conference received Section A of the Report.